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Graduate Connections



A Newsletter for UNL Graduate Students published by the Office of Graduate Studies

April 2006

Welcome to the pilot issue of **Graduate Connections**, an electronic newsletter for graduate students at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (and for faculty and staff interested in issues important to graduate students). This new quarterly publication is intended to bring you information to help you more easily make your way through your graduate school career, link you with news about events planned and organized just for you, provide you with timely information about deadlines and funding, and connect you with other graduate students at UNL.

The first regular issue of **Graduate Connections** will appear September 1, and quarterly after that on the first of December, March, and June. We welcome your comments and suggestions about how to help this newsletter connect you to information you need to make your career as a UNL graduate student fulfilling and rewarding. The Graduate Studies Office is committed to forging strong bonds with the students we serve, and we offer **Graduate Connections** as another tool in helping us fulfill that promise.

Pleasant reading!

Professional Development Network

Events, workshops, tips and strategies to give graduate students a leg up in launching a professional career

16TH ANNUAL FALL CAMPUS-WIDE WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO BE OFFERED AUGUST 15

The Fall Campus-wide TA Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants are scheduled for Tuesday, August 15, 2006, from 8:15 am to 4:45 pm. This year, Dr. C. B. Peters, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Rhode Island, will be our guest speaker. Dr. Peters is the co-author of *Teaching First-Year College Students*, a recent revision of *Teaching College Freshmen*.

In addition to delivering the keynote address, Dr. Peters will conduct workshops in “Challenging and Supporting First-year Students in Large Classes” and “Making the Most of Reading Assignments.” He will be joined by a number of distinguished UNL faculty members in facilitating workshop sessions.

Workshops will be offered in concurrent sessions on a variety of topics, some specifically for first-time teaching assistants, others for TAs of all experience levels, and some targeted for experienced TAs seeking further professional development opportunities. Find more information on the Campus-wide TA Workshops, including a registration form, at the [Graduate Studies website](#).

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

International graduate students at UNL who expect to receive instructional assignments and whose native language is not English must successfully complete the Institute for International Teaching Assistants (ITAs). The Institute, established in the summer of 1988, is a multi-purpose program designed to prepare international graduate students from various university departments to teach American undergraduates. Objectives of the program are to help ITAs develop an understanding of the teaching role in American university classrooms, provide intensive training in English pronunciation and intonation, create opportunities to practice classroom communication skills and instructional strategies, and help students during their first semester teaching with follow-up observations.

Teaching Tip

Preparing Students for Their Final Assignment

As the semester draws to a close, think about how to make the final assignment you require of students a learning experience they can carry with them as they move on in their course of studies.

Your final assignment can be the bridge that connects the learning you have worked so hard to facilitate to your students' future experiences. Such an important moment should not be left to chance – nor should it be overshadowed by the grading game.

Getting students ready to do well on their final assignment is as important as preparing the material. To be sure you get an accurate understanding of students' knowledge, it is important to reduce the effects of unnecessary stressors as you prepare them for their final assignment in your course. In a word, show students you **CARE**.

Connect. Explain how the final assignment is connected to the course objectives. Linking the exam, paper, or presentation to the semester's lessons may provide a good organizer.

Advise. Offer students advice on how to prepare and how to complete your assignment.

Review. Offer some kind of review help, by setting up study groups, scheduling review sessions, or holding extra office hours.

Empathize. Ask students how you can help them. You may be able to resolve concerns easily.

Make your last contact with students a memorable one. Build thoughtful experiences and help students bring together everything they have learned into a valuable final lesson.

Source: [Indiana State University's Center for Teaching and Learning](#), April 19, 1999.

The Summer 2006 ITA Institute runs from July 24 through August 10, 2006. The application deadline is Friday, July 7, 2006. Applications must be completed, signed, and submitted by the department chair/head, graduate chair, or TA supervisor, to 1100 Seaton Hall, City Campus 0619.

Applications and brochures for the 2006 ITA Institute are available, both online ([click here](#)) and at the Graduate Studies Office.

RESUME-BUILDING SKILLS

As summer approaches, you may want to update your resume in anticipation of a future job search. If you're looking for a non-academic career, consider how to capitalize on the skills you've developed as a graduate student – studying and mastering course content, setting up laboratory experiments and conducting research, preparing lectures and teaching classes, or writing a dissertation, papers and articles.

Participants in a recent Graduate Studies workshop on *Identifying Your Transferable Skills*, conducted by Dr. Rebecca Bryant, Director of the Graduate College Career Services Office at the University of Illinois, Champagne-Urbana, came up with various ways of describing academic skills that appeal to non-academic employers. Many of these no doubt reflect your own abilities – consider how to use them to describe skills relevant to the types of jobs you're seeking and use them in your resume and job application letters.

- Fostering memory
- Building stamina, perseverance
- Maintaining focus
- Discerning degree of importance in a large body of information
- Critically evaluating information
- Analyzing information
- Applying theoretical knowledge
- Taking relevant notes
- Developing concentration
- Organizing large amounts of information logically
- Working as a member of a team
- Demonstrating patience
- Building self-confidence
- Becoming accountable
- Synthesizing information
- Comparing and contrasting theories and ideas
- Finding patterns
- Working independently
- Communicating in writing and speaking
- Reasoning logically
- Conceptualizing a research design
- Finding and digesting relevant information
- Modifying and adapting to accommodate changing circumstances
- Multi-tasking
- Taking and giving feedback
- Sharing information
- Achieving consistency
- Documenting
- Interviewing
- Reporting
- Acquiring technical laboratory skills
- Researching and organizing information
- Summarizing information, identifying key points
- Setting goals and objectives
- Adapting presentations to the needs of a listening audience
- Anticipating questions
- Using media in presentations
- Exercising motivational and persuasive aptitude
- Expanding creativity
- Exercising patience and enthusiasm
- Interpreting data
- Developing objectivity
- Managing the flow of ideas
- Understanding and meeting the needs of a reading audience
- Transferring knowledge
- Managing time
- Mastering computer programs
- Designing documents

Calendar

Keep connected with the Grad Studies Calendar – important deadlines, dates and dealings you need to know about. Click on the links for more information.

WORKSHOPS

July 24-Aug 10 [International Teaching Assistants Institute](#)
August 15 [Campuswide TA Workshops](#)

EVENTS

August 17 New International Student Orientation
August 18 New Graduate Student Orientation

DEGREE DEADLINES

[Doctoral Degrees](#)

To be conferred December 2006

April 30 Application for candidacy

To be conferred May 2006

April 20 Oral Examination

April 21 Dissertation Deposit; Dissertation Grades;
Final Fees; Final Forms

May 5 Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

May 6 Commencement

To be conferred August 2006

June 23 Application for Advanced Degree

July 13 Application for Final Oral Exam (or Waiver);
Preliminary Copy of Dissertation/Abstract;
Incomplete Grades Removed

August 3 Oral Examination

August 4 Dissertation Deposit; Dissertation Grades;
Final Fees; Final Forms

August 11 Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

August 12 Commencement

[Masters Degrees](#)

To be conferred May 2006

April 6 Preliminary Copy of Thesis

April 14 Incomplete Grades Removed;
Results of Written Comprehensive Exam
and/or Option II Paper

April 20 Oral Examination

April 21 Thesis Deposit; Final Examination Report Form;
Payment of Binding Fee

May 6 Commencement

To be conferred August 2006

June 23 Application for Advanced Degree

July 13 Final Examination Report Form

July 14 Incomplete Grades Removed;
Results of Written Comprehensive Exam
and/or Option II Paper

July 27 Preliminary Copy of Thesis

August 3 Oral Examination

August 4 Thesis Deposit; Final Examination Report Form;
Payment of Binding Fee

August 12 Commencement

How's Your Connection?

You can read **Graduate Connections** on the Office of Graduate Studies web page, receive notification of the latest issue from your department, or have issues delivered directly to you via e-mail. To subscribe, send a message with [subscribe GC] in the subject line and your name and email address in the body of the message to gsapd2@unl.edu.

We invite your feedback and comments about this pilot issue of **Graduate Connections**. Can you use the kinds of information you find in this issue? What else can we include to help you make the right connections in the course of your graduate career? Are you engaged in research or other scholarly activity that you want to share with readers of **Graduate Connections**?

Please share your thoughts with us so we can bring you a relevant, lively and useful publication beginning in September. Send email to gsapd2@unl.edu.

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Announcements

News of note for graduate students

ON THE HORIZON: GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Each year, the Office of Graduate Studies recognizes graduate students who have made outstanding contributions to student learning or have excelled in research at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award honors a UNL graduate teaching assistant who has demonstrated special effectiveness in teaching undergraduates. ***The Graduate Research Assistant Award*** recognizes the excellent quality of research carried out by a UNL graduate student. Recipients of both awards receive a plaque and \$500 cash, and are honored at a special awards luncheon in January.

The Graduate Studies Office is developing an online application form that will be available for use when the call for both awards goes out in early September; however, if you're interested in being considered for either award, you might want to begin developing your nomination materials over the summer.

Nominees for both awards must provide a brief CV and the name and contact information for a faculty member qualified to assess their teaching or research and willing to provide a statement of support for the nomination.

Graduate teaching assistants also must submit a statement of teaching philosophy and a summary of teaching evaluations (both qualitative and quantitative) from at least two courses or labs.

Graduate research assistants also must submit a brief summary of the research project or activity, written by the nominee in non-specialized language, emphasizing the project's timeliness, significance and uniqueness. Professional Development staff members in the Office of Graduate Studies are available to advise you about submitting a nomination. Watch for more information in the September issue of **Graduate Connections**.

HEALTH AND DENTAL INSURANCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The University provides an excellent group health and dental insurance plan in which all enrolled students may participate. If you are registered for seven or more credit hours during an academic semester, you are assessed a Health Center facility fee allowing unlimited visits to primary care physicians at the University Health Center. However, additional costs like lab work, x-rays, and hospitalization are not covered and can be a heavy financial burden without proper insurance coverage.

The group health plan offers benefits up to \$250,000 in the plan year (August 14, 2006-August 13, 2007) for hospitalization, emergency outpatient services, lab tests, x-rays, and mental health services. Dental benefits amount to \$500 per plan year, including two cleanings per year and reduced rates for basic procedures. You also can purchase health insurance for family members from the same plan.

If you have accepted a graduate assistantship, you receive the added benefit of participating in the basic individual student plan at a greatly reduced rate. The University will pay 79% of the annual cost; the remaining 21% (\$230) will be billed directly to your student account. If you have insurance already and want to waive this automatic benefit, you need to visit the University Health Center business office within 14 days of your employment start date. Otherwise, you will be billed for your share of the premium.

Finally, if you are an international student, you are required to have student health insurance coverage, unless you can provide proof of equivalent insurance from an outside source by the 14th day of classes.

For complete details on the student health and dental insurance plan, call the University Health Center Business Office at 472-7435.

Services Available from the Graduate Student Professional Development Office

Fall Campus-wide Workshops for TAs
Institute for International Teaching Assistants
Preparing Future Faculty Program

Professional development workshops
Professional development courses
Individual consultation on teaching, careers, job searches

Assistance gathering student feedback
Advice on creating an academic career portfolio
Teaching resource library

Funding Opportunities

Information on fellowships, scholarships, competitions and other funding prospects

2006 COLLEGIATE INVENTORS COMPETITION

For 15 years, the [Collegiate Inventors Competition](#) has encouraged undergraduate and graduate students on their quest to change the world around them. With over \$75,000 in prizes awarded to top inventors and

their academic advisors each year, the competition is one of the most prestigious honors available to college and university innovators. The deadline for the 2006 competition is June 1, 2006.

MILTON E. MOHR SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Applications for the Milton Mohr Scholarship and Fellowship are now available for students in the College of Engineering and the Center for Biotechnology.

Applications can be obtained in your Department or Unit office and are due by April 10, 2006. Contact Lori Straatmann, lstraatmann2@unl.edu, 472-7072.

FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE IN THE FALL

Each year, not-for-profit organizations and government agencies conduct national competitions for graduate fellowship funding. For example, the [National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship](#) provides three years of support for graduate study leading to research-based masters or doctoral degrees in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields. Here is a brief list of other graduate fellowships. In some cases, hyperlinks take you to last year's fellowship announcements. Expect the requirements to be similar, but be sure to check later in the summer and early fall for current announcements.

[AAUW Educational Foundation](#) American Dissertation Fellowships
[Spencer Dissertation Fellowships](#)
[Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral and Dissertation Diversity Fellowships](#)
[NASA Graduate Student Researchers Program](#)

[Semiconductor Research Corporation Graduate Fellowships](#)
[Smithsonian Institution Fellowships](#)
American Society for Microbiology's [Robert D. Watkins Graduate Research Fellowship](#)

Annual competitions for these highly coveted awards usually have fall deadlines. Now is the time to start your search, find out as much as you can about available fellowships, determine which opportunities best match your research interests, and develop your application materials.

Typical components include an application form, personal statement, CV, research proposal, and up to five letters of reference. Professional Development staff members in the Office of Graduate Studies are available to talk to you about various fellowship opportunities and to help you craft your CV and personal statement.

Research News

Research tips and other information for graduate researchers

RESEARCH FAIR: APRIL 4, 5, 6

The 2006 [UNL Research Fair](#), a three-day event featuring collaboration, creativity, innovation and celebration of achievements, will be held April 4, 5, and 6 in the Nebraska Union. The Fair offers a perfect opportunity to network with officers from federal agencies and engage colleagues in your current research work and your ideas for the future.

Entrants in the Graduate Student Research and Creative Activity competition will make oral

presentations and present poster displays on Wednesday, April 5, from 1:30 to 5:00 PM, with awards and a reception following. The competition gives graduate students the chance to showcase their research or creative activity, to communicate their results to others, and to learn about other areas of research and creative activity.

The 2006 UNL Research Fair is free and open to the public. Registration is not required.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH GRADUATE PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The Graduate Partnerships Program (GPP) links the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) with universities in the graduate level training of students. The mission of the GPP is to establish and foster graduate education partnerships with national and international universities and institutions dedicated to quality

education in biomedical basic and clinical research while providing the infrastructure and community support needed by the students in these programs. Programs are offered for both current and prospective Ph.D. students. [Click here](#) to find information about other NIH student programs.

Interactions

Personal achievements of graduate students, research reports, teaching successes, calls for collaboration, and student-to-student interaction

ADVANCED DOCTORAL STUDENTS NEEDED TO MENTOR UNDERGRADUATES

As a current graduate student, you are in a unique position to work with an undergraduate interested in pursuing a graduate degree, by providing invaluable information and insight based on your own experience and expertise. The McNair Graduate Student Mentor Program matches graduate students with McNair Scholars in a one-to-one mentor relationship. You'll spend approximately 2-3 hours a month coaching your protégée in appropriate academic and research skills.

The McNair Scholars Program prepares selected UNL undergraduates for graduate study at the doctoral level. Twelve to fifteen new McNair Scholars come into the program each year to participate in both academic and summer activities. The program's goal is to increase

numbers of underrepresented students in doctoral programs.

This mentoring program offers a great opportunity to interact with—and make a real difference in the life of—a McNair Scholar. Our Scholars are highly motivated students who demonstrate a strong potential for graduate studies. With your guidance and support, we believe they will be even better prepared for a successful graduate experience.

If you're interested in serving as a McNair Graduate Student Mentor, contact Dr. Laurie Bellows at 472-9764 or by email at lbellows1@unl.edu for more information. For more information, see the [McNair Scholars Program](#) web site.

Readers' Corner

Interesting reading for graduate students

The Academic Game - Psychological Strategies for Successfully Completing the Doctorate by Elaine R. Parent (with Leslie R. Lewis). Published by Infinity Publishing.com, 1094 New De Haven Street, Suite 100, West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2713. ISBN 0-7414-2713-3. Available at www.buybooksontheweb.com.

Written for early-stage doctoral students, this book describes the psychological and social factors that influence whether students successfully complete the doctorate. The mantra is "Knowledge Equals Power," and the book is designed to empower students with the

information they need and strategies they can use to complete a rewarding and successful academic journey.

Read an excerpt from this book (reprinted with permission) in Stanford University's [Tomorrow's Professor Mailing List](#). By the way, this list offers an excellent discussion of teaching and learning issues, many of them especially relevant to graduate students. You can subscribe to Tomorrow's-ProfessorSM Mailing List by sending the message 'subscribe tomorrows-professor' to Majordomo@lists.stanford.edu.